The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project
Foreign Service Spouse Series

ELIZABETH LEWIS CABOT

Interviewed by: Jewell Fenzi

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CABOT: Before you start, tell me first what you are looking for. The other day when you were with those two girls (Elsie Lyon and Lilla Moffat Levitt), that was completely past history. It was wonderful. It was the old diplomacy, and you couldn't have gotten anyone who was more involved in it than those two sisters.

Q: Yes, and I really think that Lilla Moffat Levitt's memories are going to go back further than anyone else's.

CABOT: I would probably guess so.

Q: Because the other people that I've talked to - Mrs. Curtis Jordan, who is 90 and in Santa Barbara - her Foreign Service connection only dates from 1921, because she was a bride. I don't know anyone else other than Elsie and Lilla.

CABOT: Well, the amusing thing is here is Lilla, the daughter of an ambassador, having lived all those lives with her father, and then the very young wife of a very mature Foreign Service officer, who already had hit the top ranks when he married her.

Q: So, she went right from one to another and now has a son (who is an ambassador), so it's really nice for her since her husband did die so early in her career, to have a son take over.

CABOT: It's very nice.

Q: Now, when did you enter the Foreign Service? Were you married when your husband entered?

CABOT: I married him when he was a third secretary in the embassy in Mexico.

Q: In Mexico? So, he had been to Santo Domingo before?

CABOT: Oh, goodness, yes. He had Peru and Santo Domingo before coming to Mexico.

Q: So your association with the Service actually started in 1932.

So you went to Mexico City as a bride?

CABOT: No, I was living in Mexico City.

Q: Oh, you were living in Mexico City.

CABOT: And I had great connections with the Service, because I was working in New York at the Museum of Modern Art. I had a wonderful job. I was perfectly happy, and my Mother found out that I was flying and she didn't like my flying, so she used this beautiful excuse to ask me to come to Mexico for Christmas and visit her. When I got down there, it was just at the moment of turnover in the embassy. Mr. Morrow was leaving - a very astute and wise man with a very experienced wife. And a very interesting new ambassador came, whose name was Reuben Clark. A Morman. He'd been Under Secretary of State. A very able man, who came down to settle some very tedious and confusing financial patterns with Mexico. Being a Mormon, he and his wife lived very simply. In the embassy, there was no coffee, there was no tea, there was no drink ever served. There were very careful, agreeable regulations, but very simple regulations.

I had a great many connections in Mexico, so they asked me to stay for a year and be the Social Secretary and introduce Mrs. Clark to some of the confusions of diplomacy. I got my training there, because Arthur Lane, at that time, was the counselor, a very definite, astute, old-fashioned career man, and he simply taught me what goes on in an embassy. Then, I tried to help Mrs. Clark.

Q: How old were you at that time?

CABOT: I was 26.

Q: 26. And could I ask what your maiden name was?

CABOT: Elizabeth Lewis.

Q: Elizabeth Lewis.

CABOT: Yes.

Q: And your mother was living in Mexico City?

CABOT: Yes. She was married to the Manager of the Light and Power Company. It was her second marriage. I had not been within Mexico for awhile, except I had all sorts of friends and connections. By that time, Jack was at the embassy, and I just decided that I wouldn't go back to New York. We were married about eight months later.

Q: Oh, how nice. What was the reaction of the Mexicans to the simplicity of the Clark regime after what must have been a very elegant regime under Dwight Morrow?

CABOT: It was very interesting. They had every respect for Mr. Clark's ability. They recognized him as a very important power, but the way Clark handled the embassy is very interesting. Mr. Clark, after a few months - when all these politicos would come to a party and come actually soused, because they would say, "We will drink before we go there and then we will drink enough to get us through the party" - said this is not very well done and we'll do this a different way. Across the lawn from the embassy were two little houses where two of our secretaries lived. Mr. Clark, as guests came in, would say, "If you feel you must have a cocktail, would you like to go across the lawn and have a cocktail with Mr. Satterthwaite or Mr. Dawson?" Chiefly, Mr. Satterthwaite. And, of course, the ambassador took care of that for Mr. Satterthwaite, but he did not serve liquor in the embassy.

Q: But, really, how astute of him to solve the problem that way.

CABOT: It was so much better, yes. And, of course, people soon learned. I mean, everybody learns the different patterns, and they were so much appreciated for their acquired calm distinction. They were very, very simple people after this tremendously sophisticated and elaborate Morrow regime.

Q: Oh, and I'm sure it was.

CABOT: They had a big embassy. They had a lot of people. But when we announced our engagement, the State Department, instead of keeping us in Mexico, promptly shifted us, you see, which they don't do as much now. Now, they begin to let a wife, who has a connection with a country, either return to a country or stay in a country. But, in those days, the rule was adamant.

Q: I do remember that.

CABOT: So that, when we were married, we left for our post.

Q: And then you went from there to where?

CABOT: We went to Rio. We were four years in Rio. Lovely years!

Q: Lovely, a lovely city, and it lived up to its reputation?

CABOT: Everything about it was charming and beautiful and relaxed.

The world was, more or less, at peace in Europe, and the Brazilians had no serious problems, except terrible inflation even then, and much, too much, coffee. Living in Rio in those days, coffee was being thrown into the ocean. Coffee was being used for fuel for the little locomotives. We rode all over Brazil with that wonderful, beautiful smell of the burning coffee. Glorious! (laughs)

Q: Of course, that was in the Depression.

CABOT: It was all during the Depression, and living in Brazil during the Depression times was as fortunate as could be. The State Department was unkind to us. They did something that I still think is dead wrong. They announced that in the trouble of the Depression, they simply announced to us that one month's salary, the next month's salary, would be refused us. And we always had to live an extra month without any warning before our salary checks were given to us the following month. I think it was a governmental thing, probably all over the United States.

Q: All over?

CABOT: Yes, but it happened to people abroad - terrible - especially to younger people.

Q: And they didn't give you any warning?

CABOT: Without any warning. About three days warning.

Q: You know, you did mention, when I was here the last time, that your Husband lived on his Foreign Service salary for quite a number of years.

CABOT: Until he was counselor.

Q: Until he was counselor.

CABOT: Yes.

Q: And yet, everyone from this era tells me, "Oh, you counted on help from home; oh, you couldn't live on your salary." But you obviously did.

CABOT: Well, my mother paid for my nurse and she paid my hospital expenses when...

Q: ...you had your children.

CABOT: When I had my children. And that was her contribution. It was a very great help.

Q: Were they born in Rio?

CABOT: I had two born in Rio.

Q: Two born in Rio. How many do you have?

CABOT: Four.

Q: Four? And the other two were born where?

CABOT: One in Holland, and finally - the one who could be President - was born in the United States and was a girl.

Q: Was a girl! (laughs) Well, there's still hope.

CABOT: (laughs)

Q: There's still hope. They say that we are going to have a woman President one of these days.

CABOT: It was a very small embassy. I think there were six of us in the embassy. That happened to be a bachelor ambassador and a bachelor counselor, and my husband was the only secretary.

There was an old consul general and his wife downtown and a couple of vice consuls and a couple of girl clerks. And we were the embassy.

Q: And you were First Lady.

CABOT: I was the only lady, because the old consul general's wife was a wonderful lady, but she was very old and, at that time, there was that separation between the consulate and State (embassy), and, therefore, they didn't go out very much. And here was this newborn baby, and, suddenly, I was having to do a lot of extra work. It was wonderful that I'd had that training, you see, in Mexico.

Q: I was going to say that you had training in Mexico and you had this immediate opportunity to put it into effect.

CABOT: And imagine what happened when I went back to Rio, when Jack was ambassador and we had 2000 in our staff! I say it was unbelievable! We had 23 third secretaries, we had 25 or 26 second secretaries, and we had missions and missions under us. We were an absolute factory! How could you get young people trained and how could you help them meet a lot of Brazilians when there was such a multitude that most of them had to spend their time getting acquainted with their own sections? In that, I think, the State Department needs a change and a rectification.

Q: I was just going to ask you, what is the solution for that? I think the article yesterday mentioned the fact that the embassies have gotten so big.

CABOT: Overwhelming.

Q: Overwhelmingly large.

CABOT: You see, many things have happened. In our time, you were supposed to spend your entire time linking and connecting with Brazilians. Nobody would believe what was said to me in those days, because nobody has ever said it since. When I walked into my first day's meeting with the ambassador, he said to us, "Well, I hope you'll be useful to me. I will certainly throw you out if you're not."

Q: He said that to you?

CABOT: To both of us.

Q: To both of you.

CABOT: The morning we arrived.

Q: Oh, that was a cheery greeting!

CABOT: He said, "I want you to get out of this embassy. I want you to join clubs. I want you to find a place to live. I want you to meet people. And I want you to take a few trips around. I want you to come back in four weeks and tell me what you have done, and then, I'll decide whether you're useful to me." You know, we never worked harder or better. My husband's a great tennis player, so right away, we joined all the top tennis clubs, which meant that you connected with people all over Brazil. They were crazy about tennis. We took little dinky trips up and down the coast in little coastal boats. Everywhere we went, we saw that we were meeting Brazilians and we remembered their names and we stored it all up against our list for the ambassador. (laughs) And people were naturally nice to us, because the embassy just had one secretary.

And so, today, I know my Brazilian friends say to me, "You know, it isn't worth getting hold of some of your little, new Secretaries, because they're gone as soon as they've come and we can hardly distinguish between them." In that, we were favored. The present day Secretary has a lot to struggle with.

Q: He really has. He's almost insulated from the Brazilians by the vast infrastructure.

CABOT: The ambassador made us learn Portuguese. We already had Spanish, so Portuguese wasn't too difficult.

Q: That was going to be my next question, because you went out immediately on this orientation trip. You did have Spanish. Did you just gradually work over into Portuguese?CABOT: Oh, you do. I mean, I hired maids and had to talk to them. There was no such thing, luckily, as a PX, which I think is a disaster for most posts, because people are forced to congregate there and buy American food. I hato go to market. I hato move around, which I didn't realize - I thought it was a nuisance, but there's also less pressure. The husbands had more leisure to help wives, and the hours in the embassy were shorter and they were better. They were attuned to the place. In Brazil, we went very early in the morning when it was cool and we left about ll:30 or l2:00, and then everybody went to the beaches.

At the beaches, we met people and got the diplomatic news. We got all the gossip of the city and the gossip of politics. At about 2:00, we had some food, and everybody had a "siesta."

Then, the embassy reopened at 5:00, and we worked until 9:00 at night, because of the cool, again, the cool weather. Then, the parties started at 9:00, but it was attuned to the life that Brazilians lead.

You were speaking of Mexico a few minutes ago. You know, the Mexican hours are totally different from the American hours. And, again, if you want to meet a Mexican politician or a Mexican friend, you meet him about the time of 9:00 o'clock at night and then sit up until midnight or more. There was a fortunate attuning to local things. Not having PXs, we had to learn to eat the local food and all of us got our lessons in what we had not to eat and how we had to prepare things. But they were very simple lessons.

Q: I think the food situation in Brazil was very easy to adapt to, I found. We were in Recife (a seaport in northeastern Brazil) for three and a half years.

CABOT: Yes. It was such fun. There's a wonderful fish.

Q: Wonderful.

CABOT: And they were sweet people.

Q: I used to look forward to going down to the open market every Thursday morning.

CABOT: And then, it made you link up with people.

Q: Exactly. I've always felt, too, that having to go out and find your own housing has always linked us up with somebody influential in the country, because these are the people who have the houses for rent for the diplomats. I think to walk in and be told, "This is your house that the Administrative Section has picked out for you," means you've lost a chunk of your opportunity to get out.

CABOT: And also, in post after post, sometimes it's necessary, but you are faced with Danish Modern (furniture), which has been piled up all over the world, very nice, very adequate, but very dull after awhile. (laughs)

Q: You can move from the same furniture in Sierra Leone to the same furniture in Brazil, which I think we did. (laughs)

CABOT: And today, it's an entirely different story. We had, I suppose, a thousand children in the embassy and, therefore, you had to spend a great deal of time and effort on the schools and seeing that the schools ran well. You have a very large nursing staff probably there now. I've forgotten. It's been twenty years since I was in Rio. I mean, I didn't know whether you had a doctor and several nurses to take care of you in Recife.

Q: We did, but the nurse was in Brasilia, and we were in Recife, so that wasn't any help, and the regional medical officer was in Montevideo.

CABOT: Further and further.

Q: So, we were a bit isolated in Recife from the Sao Paulo-Rio-Brasilia axis. In Rio, were you really involved in any embassy procedures or was it - what I would call - the traditional, representational role of the wife?

CABOT: You mean, in those early days?

Q: Yes, in those early days.

CABOT: In those early days, all the representation was in the hands of the ambassador. After awhile, we got a couple of missions.

We got a big naval mission and then we got a military mission. When we had the Sao Paulo Revolution, they rushed down a wonderful major to discover what the Revolution was all about. After he went out and surveyed the battlefield, he came back and reported to the ambassador that all he could find was empty sardine cans on the battlefield. (laughs) You know, revolutions were very simple affairs in those days. But we were "on tap." The ambassador expected us to be "on tap," and that is hard for some young families coming, because this is why: Just as soon as I had a baby, I had to have a nurse, because I was expected to move around and be available. We did the usual business. We moved around with visitors when we were asked to do it.

Q: So, your role really was to wait for a summons from the ambassador to do this, that, or the other?

CABOT: And he had very definite ideas and used us hard, and it was very good for us.

Q: I was just going to say, did you find that beneficial? Let me put it this way: did you sometimes resent it at the time, but find it was beneficial later?CABOT: I resented it terribly when the new ambassador came with a European wife, who did not like Brazil. She moved up to the hills.

Q: To Tijuca, an hour out of town.

CABOT: She moved up near to the statue where she got a beautiful old "fazenda", and had it all fixed up to suit her, because she liked country living. Because she was up in the country, she wanted a great deal of work done for her in the city. I mean, good heavens, she was a good hour out of town, and that wasn't much, but that meant I really was completely "on tap" as her slave. In modern embassies, there are so many members, nobody is forced to do smuch. Then, after awhile, you see, in Rio, I was the only Secretary all the time. Today, there isn't an embassy that doesn't have a lot of Secretaries to divide things up among.

Q: If you're "on tap" all the time and you were running a house and you had a baby, even though you had a nurse, there really wasn't much time left for you to do what you wanted to do, was there? I mean, what is your interest?

CABOT: Yes, but you see, life was... It was a lovely life. Our interests were people, and because it was people, we were doing all those pleasant things. Everybody met on the beaches. It's the most curious thing in Rio. There were a series of little shore cafes and people's houses all on the Copacabana Beach, which is now all hotels, and therefore, by circling there for a couple of hours a day, you did an enormous amount of connection, you see, because it was so easy.

Q: You weren't playing, you were working.

CABOT: That's right. It was that pleasant form of working. It was so useful, which in Europe afterwards, you did by going to dinner parties where people had long, elaborate dinner parties, but with lots of conversation after dinner.

Q: By the time you were thirty, you were really very experienced.

CABOT: I was lucky enough, because my second post was Holland, and Holland was as formal a post as I could get. It was the time that Juliana was married.

Q: Oh, yes.

CABOT: And it was a very set little court, prewar existence.

Q: Yes, 1935. And then, you were there for how long?

CABOT: We had three and a half years.

Q: Three and a half years. When did the Germans march in? That was later, wasn't it?CABOT: Well, I'll tell you, we were there when...

Q: When World War II was fomenting and brewing?

CABOT: Yes. We got word one day, on a Friday morning, that my husband was transferred to Stockholm after three and a half years, which meant that you were well entrenched in Holland.

Q: How did you do in Dutch?

CABOT: I always learned enough to run a house. You have to. It's just so much better. It's stupid not to.

Q: But I'm sure at that time, too, in the early 1930s, the educated people that you dealt with socially all spoke English and French.

CABOT: Every Northern European - Dutch, Swedish, any of them, speak about four languages. My husband spoke good German, you see, and mine was very piddly. So, we survived. We moved around. But we got this word that my husband was ordered to Sweden and if he wanted to take his wife and children, they were to leave within two days for Stockholm. And he was to proceed, after four days, to Stockholm, and somebody was replacing him in Holland. You see, they thought the war was coming and they wanted to get somebody on the other side of the line.

Q: That's why they wanted you to go first?

CABOT: I had to go by train. By that time, I had three children, and I just had too much. You see, you didn't fly that easily. He didn't fly; he drove his car. He drove our car. That was really important. He filled the car with possessions. And when you're trying to decide with a large family and all your real treasures and your necessities, what do you put in a car? That's why you send the wife on the train. (laughs)

Q: Well then, you were essentially evacuated then?

CABOT: We were practically evacuated.

Q: Did you have your own household things? Your furniture?

CABOT: They were all left in Holland. They couldn't go.

Q: And did you ever retrieve them?

CABOT: After quite a long time. They were packed up and sent by the embassy back to the States. By that time, we were in Guatemala.

So, when we got to Stockholm, you see, our difficulty was that they said. They sent this stupid telegram (which read) "temporary assignment." And that means anything. It means six months. It means six years, as we all know. And, therefore, nobody in Sweden would rent us an apartment under two years, and we didn't dare sign up for an apartment.

Q: Because you didn't know.

CABOT: Because we didn't know and because war was just brewing, you see.

Q: And did you live in a hotel?

CABOT: I'll tell you the most wonderful thing happened. We stayed in a hotel for a couple of weekand we were just staggered financially. We had to get out of it. Couldn't pay being in a hotel forever. We went to dinner with a very nice man, who was the Peruvian ambassador in Stockholm, and just by luck, he had been Jack's landlord in Peru.

Q: Oh, my goodness. There we go, looking for housing and finding...

CABOT: And you won't believe it. Everybody just cheered around Stockholm when it all happened. He said, "My wife is in Paris and she can't bear Stockholm. I'm very lonesome, and there's really almost no work for Peru. Cabot, I know you and I know you well. Why don't you move into the Peruvian embassy?

Q: Marvelous.

CABOT: "And you can live here, if you'll forward all my mail, send all my messages, and the day I have to come back, you get out. You can have my house."

Q: He was evacuated from Stockholm?

CABOT: No, his wife didn't like Paris.

Q: Didn't like Stockholm?

CABOT: I mean, she didn't like Stockholm.

Q: So, she was in Paris.

CABOT: Yes, and he wanted to join her. You know, they didn't have much work for Peru in Stockholm.

Q: So, you took over as a representative of the Peruvian, informal representative.

CABOT: We moved in. We weren't his representative. We were just his letter pusher. But we moved into his place, and everybody thought it was the funniest thing in Creation. Here are the Cabots sitting right in the Peruvian Residence! And, of course, Jack had been in Peru, so here he was totally familiar with all his decorations, and we stayed all that Winter.

Q: How marvelous!

CABOT: It was unbelievable. He had very nice Scots staff, of all things, and we were very faithful about sending every possible message in connection with him. And then one day, the telegram came, "Cabot. Transferred to Guatemala. Next week." (laughs)

Q: So, you were there for how long? Six months?

CABOT: We were there for about nine months. You see, the war hadn't started, and therefore, they decided that the war was still coming and that Cabot had too many children in Stockholm.

Q: Oh, I see.

CABOT: You see.

Q: So, they wanted...

CABOT: So, they wanted us out and they sent a Foreign Service officer with no family in our place.

Q: And off you went to Guatemala.

CABOT: And off we went to Guatemala.

Q: And there, your household effects caught up with you?

CABOT: In Guatemala, after awhile.

Q: I see. (laughs)

CABOT: So, wasn't that wonderful?

Q: Yes.

CABOT: It was one of those things that almost never happens in life, unless you hit something amazing in Recife.

Q: Well, no, our housing was provided there.

CABOT: By that time.

Q: Was your husband reporting?

CABOT: He was the only Secretary in Stockholm again. Again, these embassies were so small, you see. There was a counselor.

Q: Was this sort of a listening post for Scandinavia?

CABOT: Yes, and, of course, we had a perfectly wonderful time when we were still in Holland. We decided we'd take a few trips around Europe, because my husband had been a Latin American specialist, and we were sure that we'd be sent back to Latin America. So, he said, "We've got three weeks of vacation. Let's go to Norway, Sweden, Latvia, Estonia, with luck, Finland, and we'll end up in Poland. We'll never see those countries again as long as we live. Then, we'll get back before our vacation's over." Well, of course, it took no time at all for us to be transferred to Stockholm in the middle of the visit. (laughs)

Q: Because he was up there and he knew what was happening. They'll keep him there. (laughs)

CABOT: And it was so marvelous that we saw those three little countries, those three, poor benighted countries that were just swallowed up. And then, of course, afterwards, we were sent to Finland, so we had a wonderful time seeing Finland, too. When we returned there, at least we knew what it was all about. Wasn't that luck?

Q: Yes, yes. Luck, yes, yes. Either luck or doing the right thing - being in the right place at the right time.

CABOT: Well, there's a lot to chance in this life.

Q: A lot of people say that about their success in the Foreign Service...there's a lot of luck.

CABOT: Oh, luck is very important.

Q: Luck is important, but it is also recognizing an opportunity when it's there.

CABOT: Or of keeping oneself very flexible. That's the only thing I ever argue. If you can keep flexible and happy, it's a marvelous life, but you've got to keep a little flexible.

Q: I think you keep very flexible, and I think you become very adaptable. I think that helps us as we move on into our advancing years. You're so used to jumping and so used to moving with whatever, whichever direction that you need to go, that it either ages us completely or it keeps us going a long time.

CABOT: We were lucky. We had four children, and even though two of them were desperate and loathed the Foreign Service and two were just wild about the Foreign Service, because there were four - you get shifted from place to place - the four cherished each other and suffered together, and it made a big difference in their lives, because they all had very adventuresome times.

We always sent them to local schools until we had to send them back to the States, but two of them would walk into a house and say, "Well, this is nice. I can have a party here," and two would say, "You've moved me and I've lost my friends and what am I going to do? Why make some more friends?"

Q: Was it that two...?

CABOT: A boy and a girl and a boy and a girl.

Q: Were they the older or the younger?

CABOT: One of each set.

Q: One of each set. Isn't that interesting?

CABOT: It was temperament.

Q: Of course it was.

CABOT: But in the long run, as I look them over since they've grown up so completely, they all survived the Foreign Service. And when it was all over, I think they were very pleased they did it.

Q: Mine also. Mine only complained really about having to go to boarding school in Switzerland at a very early age when we were in West Africa, and I really can't blame them, because they were only eight and eleven.

CABOT: That was cruel.

Q: That was cruel. We were in a former British colony. All the British children were gone. Schooling was at a minimum.

CABOT: Yes.

Q: And everyone was doing it. People ask me if I would do it again, and I say, "no", because I wouldn't go to Sierra Leone again under those circumstances. But in those days, you did.

CABOT: You did, and everybody had to.

Q: Right, right. We weren't alone. All our British friends and colleagues were without their children, and all of the embassy people, American people, were without theirs.

CABOT: You had to. There were no arrangements made.

Q: That's the thing my children complain about the most. What they complained about the most was (the school's) food, really, more than anything else.

CABOT: That's interesting, because we can hope to control it by having some at home, but I made my son go out. He'd eat other people's food. (laughs) Poor guy. But you see, by the time we got to such posts as Yugoslavia with Tito, we were given flat orders that no child was to go. We were really living in wartime conditions.

Q: Well, I was going to say, that was...

CABOT: And in China, you see, the orders were that all women and children were to be evacuated and, therefore, I had no children in China so that by the time the children had five or six years at home in prep school and college, they were goners. I mean, by that time they came on vacations.

Q: As I mentioned when I came in, having read over your husband's postings, you really were always - seeming to me - in troubled areas.

CABOT: It suited him.

Q: Yes, he liked it.

CABOT: He didn't like it. He couldn't have been more bored than when he was in Holland.

Q: Because nothing was...

CABOT: Everything was so orderly and in such beautiful condition, he almost died. I learned my lesson then, that I must never, never, ever push for a post where he wasn't terribly active.

Q: Terribly active. Now, let's see. What was happening in Guatemala when you went there in 1938?

CABOT: There was a man called Ubico. He was a firm dictator. (General Jorge Ubico Castaï¿½eda became president in l93l. His government reduced Guatemala's debts and improved the country's economic condition, but the people had little political freedom. In l944, they forced Ubico to resign.)That was my first political ambassador, too. He was a nephew of Bernie Baruch's, a very amiable man, sweet soul, but who was interested in fishing. (laughs) And, therefore, he let my husband run the embassy.

Q: Now, by that time, was your husband DCM?

CABOT: Well, in those years, the embassies were so small...

Q: He was political counselor?

CABOT: There was no DCM. I mean, there were only about four of us in the embassy. Where it was very interesting for us and where my husband worked very hard is that the War was going on in Europe. We were all trying very hard to persuade the Latin American countries to not help the Germans. (Guatemala declared war on Germany, Italy and Japan during World War II and became a charter member of the United Nations in l945.)

In Guatemala, there were a great many "fincas", some of which the Germans had carefully placed along the seaboards. One of my husband's games was to find out where the German submarines were being refueled and where they were being assisted, which meant a great deal of travel around Guatemala following clues.

Q: So the Germans were even refueling their submarines on that side of the ocean?

CABOT: Of course they were. You see, they were attacking British shipping. The United States wasn't in the War, but these little British ships bring foodstuffs into the Carribean were being regularly attacked by German submarines, and the German submarines had to have friendly bases.

Q: Fuel, yes.

CABOT: Anyway, that was part of the fun.

Q: And then I see that you went from Guatemala to Buenos Aires, because the Argentinians at that time were leaning toward the Axis.

CABOT: Yes, and he worked very hard, because he traveled up and down Central America trying to persuade the Central American countries to stay firmly with the United States.

Q: Where did he find these fueling depots?

CABOT: Every now and then, you would hear of a "finca," and then a surprising number of tanks of petrol.

Q: What advantage did a Central American or South American have at that point in time, in the 1940's, to side with Germany?

CABOT: Well, supposing they had sided with Germany. That would have been in our back yard. We hadn't gone to war yet.

Q: Were they just interested in selling petrol like an export commodity to make money or did they politically lean toward the Germans?

CABOT: These were not Guatemalan, these were German petrol stations. The Germans were a very large and important colony and had been for a long time.

Q: Oh, I see.

CABOT: And there were German settlers all through Central America and in Colombia. Colombia's so near the Canal (the Panama Canal).

Q: I see. And so your husband spoke German and was a Latin American specialist?

CABOT: We never spoke German in Guatemala.

Q: But, what I should have said, he was familiar with the German culture?

CABOT: Yes. But you were asking why, what were the problems there. The problem was to keep Guatemala in line, as it were, with our basic policies.

Q: And that must have been why he went to Buenos Aires from Guatemala, right?

CABOT: From Guatemala, he went as counselor for Spruille Braden (The Honorable Spruille Braden, EE/MP Colombia l938; AE/P Colombia l939; AE/P Cuba l94l, AE/P Argentina l945, and Assistant Secretary of State AM Repub Affairs, 1945), and Spruille Braden was there - I think it was six weeks or a month or two of his arrival - when he got so elaborately mixed up in politics that he was recalled.

Q: In Argentina?

CABOT: In Argentina.

Q: Now, how did he manage to do that?

CABOT: Because in the elections, he was so strongly in favor of one party that the Peron Party simply put out a slogan "Peron 'si', Braden 'no'." It didn't even say the name of the candidate.

Q: Was he a career ambassador?

CABOT: No, no, no. He was political, but he'd had Cuba before. He was a very... He was Braden Copper Mines in Chile. He had a Chilean wife. He was a very astute, experienced, Latino man, and he had been ambassador in Cuba.

Q: In Cuba?

CABOT: And he asked Jack to be ambassador in Buenos Aires. Then, when Braden was kissed out, my husband stayed a year as chargï¿½ until we got on such polite terms and we had an ambassador again.

Q: Did he feel so strongly anti-Peronista? Is that why he came out strongly for the opposition candidate?

CABOT: Well, he was for what they called the Niï¿½os Pia. He was for the Establishment - the Establishment that had these wonderful "fincas," that had this marvelous agricultural richness, all these factories. Those Argentines that lived so well in Paris, all had their wonderful rich stock in Argentina.

Q: You know, that is still there, that wonderful land and everything. It is just astonishing that that country should have any problems at all.

CABOT: Perfectly unbelievable. It's one of the richest lands on earth with very good populations, populations that are very homogeneous. They were Germans, they were Italians, they were Spanish. There were practically no Indians, and they were all hardworking, rich, successful immigrants.

Q: And you have a temperate climate. You have a great deal of, as you are saying, European influence. I thought Buenos Aires was marvelous. I felt as though I was in Europe. How long were you there then?

CABOT: We were there about a year, as I remember. And then, when they decided to have an ambassador, they sent George Messersmith and, of course, we left. (The Hon. George Strausser Messersmith, Assistant Secretary of State l937, AE/P Cuba l940, AE/P Mexico l941, and AE/P Argentina l946)

Q: So your husband had been Chargï¿½?

CABOT: All that time.

Q: And when a new ambassador comes, the chargï¿½ traditionally leaves, because...

CABOT: Because up to now, it works better. The ambassador wants to bring in his own people.

Q: Of course, he does. Well, yes, and the conflict too if you stay on.

CABOT: He might not be in tune with the ambassador.

Q: Exactly. No, I understand that. So, then you went to Yugoslavia?

CABOT: No, we went to the War College.

Q: Oh, you went to the War College after that?

CABOT: And that was fun, because that was the second class at the War College. You see, the War College was just starting. They started to bring back young men that were almost Class 1, just at that stage.

Q: And the War College was a breeding ground for ambassadors?

CABOT: And for more things. We had a Navy and an Army and Air Force and commercial people - the tops of every organization, government organization, all back to be together for a year. We all lived at the War College at Fort McNair. It's a lovely place, and they all learned each other's language. You learned the language that the Navy speaks and the Army speaks, and they learned the State Department language, which is just as important. It was a very interesting year.

Q: Really to send you out as a more well-rounded...?

CABOT: Government representative. Then from that time on, we kept meeting all of our friends in all the jobs, you see, that they all promptly got into with the War and everything else.

Q: Now, we're still in the 1940's, so that was before this great proliferation as far as embassy size was concerned?

CABOT: Of course.

Q: It was in l946 that the new Foreign Service Act...

CABOT: Must have been.

Q: Yes, it was, and Henry Wriston was the President of Brown, was he not?

CABOT: I think so.

Q: I think so.

CABOT: Yes, you see, up to that time, all embassies had been small. It sometimes got up to a dozen, sometimes it got to two dozen, but that was a tremendous amount. Therefore, you knew everybody well and you could keep tabs on people - who was happy and who was enjoying doing his work and why he wasn't.

Q: And who was bright and efficient.

CABOT: Yes. I think instead of this tremendous paperwork that's sent back on people's efficiencies, there was a quieter evaluation which was a better and kinder evaluation of people - whether they were strong and where they were weak.

Q: And maybe it was more personally efficient too, because there was a closer relationship between the ambassador and his small staff.

CABOT: Yes.

Q: This must have been in the days when the Foreign Service had about eight hundred or a thousand.

CABOT: Probably. It had five hundred and fifty when my husband went in in the whole State Department, and I think it was about eight or nine hundred by the time this next Act came along.

Q: And was it still in what is the Old State building?

CABOT: Yes. I don't remember, because we were abroad when they shifted us. They shifted us from the Old State to the Old Pentagon building.

Q: Which is where the State Department is now?

CABOT: Is now, yes. That was the Pentagon building until the Pentagon was built.

Q: That's right, because one of my husband's offices was where the Manhattan Project at a much later date was developed.

CABOT: Things moved very fast, and government got bigger and bigger and bigger. Well, look at the...

Q: Probably there's been more change in diplomatic life in your career and when my career ended two years ago than ever before.

CABOT: Oh, absolutely.

Q: And maybe for the next...

CABOT: I don't know what's going to happen. I hope very much in the next years that we're retrenching. You see, what's happened is when in the old days a diplomat was sent out, he was told to see what he could do to understand the problems and offer solutions. Today, a diplomat is sent out to relay messages. In the old days, we had no airplanes, and I don't think you ever used a telephone until quite late. I don't know when that telephone service came in. I don't know how long after the War.

Q: I don't know.

CABOT: I don't know, I don't really know. But I know we never used telephones except for dire emergencies. And today, you have a linking of airplane and telephone which is fantastic and, therefore, by degrees the embassy becomes a relay station instead of a planning and completing pattern station.

Q: Right. And I'm wondering if these great - well, they are burdensome - the administrative section abroad is sometimes three times larger than the rest of the staff.

CABOT: Yes.

Q: And expensive. We may be coming to a point where we're going to have to retrench all that and have the modern equivalent of a consular agent out there who's just sending messages back.

CABOT: Well, unfortunately, an embassy is more or less a relay station these days.

Q: Yes.

CABOT: I don't know how many of these services that are out now will go or whether they will retrench. By the time agriculture and commerce and many other governmental agencies each had to send a representative out, Topsy started growing.

Q: And that proliferated, yes.

CABOT: And Topsy grew and grew. This is why, not to be snorty, but this is why it was essential there be a core of control, starting with the ambassador and going down through his deputy chief of mission and controlling the many agencies, including all the State people. Unfortunately, that does not seem to take place, because increasingly these other agencies report to Washington and frequently bypass the ambassador. They do not agree on a pattern.

Q: Did you find this to be true the times your husband was ambassador? Are you speaking from experience?CABOT: Actually, we were very lucky, because when he was ambassador, we were in distant countries where the embassy and the ambassador were in full control, especially because of communication. This is in China, in Finland, in Sweden, Yugoslavia, and Poland. You see, everything had to go ut through the embassy. There was a centering into the embassy, and I'm sure... Well, look today. You are looking at the size of the embassy in Mexico where you've just been. It's enormous!

Q: My husband asked me about the Visa Section when I came back to Trinidad from one of my meetings, and I said, "It's the only visa waiting line that I've ever seen that had a vanishing point. It just went on and on and on and on." And, of course, there was the huge staff to handle it.

Could we get back to Yugoslavia, because you were there when Tito was taking over.

CABOT: Tito had taken over.

Q: Tito had taken over by the time you got there? And the other man?

CABOT: Mikhailovich?

Q: Yes, Mikhailovich, whom Tito...

CABOT: Superceded, beat out, as it were.

Q: Yes, and annihilated. Were you there during all of that?

CABOT: We were there after Tito had succeeded in getting the control, but we lived in the embassy, which had been all bombed out. Again, this is why no children could ever go. We had ourselves and the counselor and the military attachï¿½ and another secretary all living in the House with us, because there were no quarters in that bombed out Belgrade for other people to live. Our food was mostly K-ration, because the Yugoslavs were on the strictest bread rationing, and we were not allowed to go into the markets, except for fresh vegetables. Such things as the necessary comestibles were all rationed. Once a week a plane would fly in from Italy and bring the food to the beleaguered people in the embassy. They had to bring in so many supplies to repair the house, like windowpanes and pipes and paint.

Q: You're talking about essentials now?

CABOT: Yes.

Q: Not drapes and rugs and things...

CABOT: Yes, because war was brewing. Therefore, there was no place for frivolities. What they brought to us for food was of the simplest. We all lived in jeeps, you see, because the roads were so bad and so broken that you had to use jeeps. And that's very different from Yugoslavia today.

Q: My next question was going to be, how free were you to go out into the country?

CABOT: My husband developed a passion for Mohammedan architecture. He decided that he had wanted all his life - because he went to Oxford and studied art one of two places - to discover some of those Mohammedan ruins that were left over from the time that the Church controlled Yugoslavia. So he would apply to the Foreign Office to take trips into the interior, and we would take a jeep and then we would take a second jeep with a sergeant and some food and some gasoline, and we would go off on our trips in the interior. Otherwise, we never in the world would have gotten into the interior.

Q: And so he did it for the architecture?

CABOT: Yes. We had a wonderful time.

Q: And to pick up information en route? From what era do those Muslim ruins date?

CABOT: About the fifteenth century.

Q: Oh, Fifteenth Century.

CABOT: And there are a surprising number. You see, the Turks overran Yugoslavia and Albania. They overran about half of Greece and they worked all the way up to Hungary. They have some very handsome old monasteries, all mostly pretty crumbly. I don't know today whether they have been restored. Anyway, that was our excuse for taking trips, because, otherwise, you couldn't take many trips around. In the first place, the people were too battered. They couldn't bear to talk to you. They were very much under the thumb. They'd survived the Germans and they still fought each other. The Croats and the Serbs were still fighting to the death.

Q: There were some clips last night on McNeil-Lehrer of the fighting. Did you happen to see it - of the fighting in Yugoslavia and how brutal it is?

CABOT: Oh, it was terribly brutal.

Q: Yes.

CABOT: We got in on the most interesting expression of true Communism. Tito was a true Communist and he used the country people to help rebuild the city. The young people built the railroad. It was called the Friends' Row or Young Friends' Row or something, but they literally carried the rails and literally pounded them down with such little equipment as you can imagine.

Q: Now, he managed to build up a national pride?

CABOT: He built up this national pride, and it was a Communist pride. It was true Communism. And my husband was very much interested in that, and he said, "It is going to do two things. In the first place, it is going to seal Yugoslavia. She is going to be an entity, strong in herself." You know, it was so terribly broken up with these factions before. "And secondly, Stalin is too heavy-handed, and Tito's going to break." So, most happily, my husband got one of his double promotions when he recommended the State Department do everything to push Tito into a break.

Then, seeing so much Communism, really extraordinary Communism in action, they said to him, "Go to China and see if Mao Tse-tung is going to be 'Commie' or whether he's going to be Chinese." And all the Chinese Hands who lived in China said, "Good God! What are they doing sending Cabot to China? He has nothing to do with China. He has had no training and no experience whatever with China."

Q: So you did...you went from Belgrade to Shanghai?

CABOT: So we went. He became counselor in Nanking and consul general in Shanghai, because he had that experience, that connection. We were amongst the very few that ever connected with the Chinese Communists that were not utterly destroyed.

Q: I was just going to say - destroyed by the China incident. But did that happen before Jack Service and John Carter Vincent?

CABOT: No, but because my husband was so well known as an expert in other fields, when the time came that they slew the China Hands, he was never considered a China Hand. But he had more links with the Chinese Communists when we were in China than almost anybody else, because it was his job.

Q: He must have been a very adroit and very astute diplomat.

CABOT: He was very adroit, yes. But, you see, this was our reason for being in China. So we had that extraordinary experience of watching China disintegrate. We had a wonderful ambassador there. His name was Leighton Stuart, (Hon. John Leighton Stuart, AE/P China l946) and he had been the head of a Chinese University, and Mao Tse-tung had been one of his students. It is one of the crimes in life that when Leighton Stuart kept saying to Washington, "Let me talk to Mao Tse-tung. Let me talk to him. He's one of my students. He's one of my close, close contacts," the China Lobby in Washington was so strong, they prevented us from doing any connections with Mao Tse-tung. And then, you had to wait so many years to get in touch again.

Q: That was 1947?

CABOT: Yes.

Q: That you went to Shanghai?

CABOT: We were (there from) l947 to l949. We left in l949 when we broke relations.

Q: Who? Was this the State Department or was it the Administration?

CABOT: I think the request went all the way back to Harry Truman, but Harry Truman had advisors that said, "Nothing doing."

Q: Who said "Nothing doing?"

CABOT: Chiang Kai-shek was very, very strong. The China Lobby was one of the strongest that we had in the United States.

Q: George Marshall was Secretary of State?

CABOT: He had finished, I think.

Q: Finished? I have him...

CABOT: It was Dean Acheson. No, I'm all wrong. I forget who...

Q: Dean Acheson apparently came in in 1949.

CABOT: I can't tell you whether it was... I don't think it was under Dean Acheson. I think it was the Secretary of State before Dean Acheson.

Q: Before? That was Marshall, according to (my chronology).

CABOT: He was a wonderful man.

Q: This really predated the McCarthy, Nixon, Knowland anti-Communist hysteria, this attitude from the Truman Administration?

CABOT: It was the China Lobby. It wasn't a Truman feeling. The China Lobby was one of the strongest and one of the most successful lobbies America has ever endured. Look how many years it has endured! Hasn't finished with it yet.

Q: Now, who are the members of the China Lobby?

CABOT: Chiang Kai-shek and his wife, the Madam.

Q: The Madam, and she was one of the Soong sisters?

CABOT: Soong sisters. But, you see, the Chinese always have their hand in every direction, and the oldest Soong sister, who lived in Shanghai, was the direct link to Mao Tse-tung. She was in touch with the Chinese Communists all the time. (Mrs. Cabot is referring to one of Madam Chiang Kai-shek's older sisters, Ching-ling Soong, who was married to the revolutionary Dr. Sun Yat-sen. Actually, the oldesSoong sister was Ai-ling Soong, a speculator, who was married to H.H. Kung.) The Soong sisters had a brother called T.V. Soong, who was in charge of China's finances, and I forget what the fourth one did. They were in every direction. (Here again, Mrs. Cabot is referring to H.H. Kung, Madam Chiang Kai-shek's brother-in-law, who was China's Finance Minister. T.V. Soong was Prime Minister for a time. The other two brothers, T.L. Soong and T.A. Soong were financiers. All six Soongs were the children of the famous Charlie Soong, aka Han Chao-shung, who was a Bible publisher and revolutionary who went to the United States when he was a young man.)

Q: One of them went to Wellesley.

CABOT: That was Madam Chiang Kai-shek. (Both Ai-ling and May-ling, aka Madam Chiang Kai-shek, also attended Wesleyan College in Macon, Georgia.)

Q: She went to Wellesley?

CABOT: Yes. I don't know whether the other sisters did also, but she was a very strong Wellesley, very charming, very exotic lady.

Q: She was living in the Watergate, wasn't she? (Mrs. Fenzi may be thinking of Anna Chennault, who lives in the Watergate apartments and is still a strong supporter of the China Lobby.)

CABOT: I shouldn't be surprised.

Q: Is she still alive?

CABOT: She may be alive.

Q: I don't know.

CABOT: We're about the same age. And he died (Chiang Kai-shek) about five or six years ago.

Q: Has it been that recent?

CABOT: I think so. I've lost touch.

Q: Here we were, with an ambassador in a position to go directly to Mao...

CABOT: He didn't go directly all the way up to the North, but he went through Mrs. Sun Yat-sen and some of her connections, through to Mao, and got the messages back and forth.

Then, we traveled in China. We were very lucky. We had small Army planes at our disposal. We took a number of small trips, which the Chinese were very decent about allowing.

Q: Where did the power that backed the China Lobby come from? I mean, what kind of power was there?

CABOT: Over the years, a tremendously developed linking with American senators, American congressmen, educators. There were so many churches that had those connections in China - missionaries, you see - schools, educators.

Q: Jack Service's parents were missionaries.

CABOT: Yes. They were absolutely marvelous China Hands, and Jack (Service) got slaughtered. That was one of the most disturbing and sad things that ever happened. I told you the China Lobby was strong.

Q: Yes, and they saw to it, was that it?

CABOT: Yes. The Fairbanks still live in Boston. He's very active in lecturing and writing. So is she.

Q: I guess the one I really know the most about is Jack Service, because I did an interview of Caroline in Oakland, and also I now have the transcript of her oral interview with the Bancroft Library in Berkeley.

CABOT: Oh, how nice.

Q: And I think it's the only record of how the family suffered with the social history of this era that you're telling me about right now. It's really the only extent that I know of - how when he had to get a job in New York selling steam pipes - I mean, some very ordinary thing - and people wouldn't rent them an apartment, because they knew who they were.

CABOT: At that time, there was a great deal of fabricated emotion. You didn't get the Davies? John Paton Davies?

Q: No, are they still here?

CABOT: I don't know. I knew him in Peru, because he moved to Peru and started to make furniture. I don't know about the Davieses. Maybe somebody could tell you, because I think they're still going.

Q: John Paton Davies.

Q: I'm fascinated with what you're telling me. This all took place, you see, before I came into the Foreign Service. And I was in for thirty years! (laughs)

CABOT: I know it! And so much has happened since, you see.

Q: I was a sophomore in college in Hawaii during this period that you're telling me about now, much more interested in what I was going to do on Saturday night than I was in world affairs.

CABOT: Well, actually correctly.

Q: (laughs) Well, thank you. I like to think so. John Vincent Carter died, didn't he?

CABOT: John Carter Vincent.

Q: John Carter Vincent, yes.

CABOT: I think he did. You see, I never was in very close touch with any of those. By the time we got to China, they were already evacuating people, and most of those men had been pushed out, had been brought home to be interrogated, and so, I never saw them, except occasionally when I saw them with connections here, but I don't know anything about that earlier history.

Q: I'm fascinated with the Soong sisters now. If they really had that much influence.

CABOT: Oh, they had enormous influence.

Q: They did, didn't they?

CABOT: The Soong family. Enormous influence. There are several quite interesting books on the Soong sisters. It might amuse you to read one of them. I can't remember who wrote the one called The Soong Sisters - one of the better ones.

Q: And that is spelled S-o-o-n-g?

CABOT: Yes.

Q: I'm going to the Library of Congress tomorrow and that would be a very good - I try to sneak over there, oh, once a month to do some work.

CABOT: And you know their present problem is, they're just wondering how soon they're going to lose all their volumes, you know, with deterioration. They're just entering this new process of trying to save millions of books they have.

Q: Are they running into financial problems like everybody else?

CABOT: They just asked Congress for one of these million dollar appropriations or something.

Q: Well, I hope they get it.

CABOT: Oh, they need to.

Q: I hope they get it. I remember the...

CABOT: But actually it will be so sad when the day comes that Congress is put on tape, because you know the fun of going to Congress is flipping through those catalogues and you find something that you want, and there is something right behind it, something that suggests something. You learn so much just from flipping those pages instead if somebody just said, "Poke a button and get a roll." There's no connection with anything else. You just get your roll...

Q: ...and microfiche. There again, that's the technological age that is upon us and taking over, maybe.

Now, from Shanghai, you went to Helsinki?

CABOT: From Shanghai, we came back and went to the United Nations. It was a very, very interesting period. It was a very short period. We still were at Lake Success. The American delegation lived at the Vanderbilt Hotel down around 34th Street, something like that, and every morning they would all motor out to Lake Success where the sessions were held. During that Winter, they built the United Nations buildings, and we were there for the Inaugural of the United Nations building. John Foster Dulles did that. It was just exciting. It was unbelievable. Here really was the United Nations in front of your eyes, and it made life very much easier for our husbands.

Q: How far was Lake Success?

CABOT: Oh, it was a long ways. About three-fourths of an hour out to Long Island.

Q: And then, back in again at night, of course.

CABOT: But, you know, at that time our delegation was so small. We were all on the early delegations. My husband was in charge of the Argentine, the Dutch, and the Chinese Affairs - anything that came up that affected the American delegation, affected the three lines my husband was handling. Today, just guess how many we have at the UN?

Q: Oh, scores.

CABOT: Scores, you see. (laughs) It was very interesting. And then, after awhile, they put us on the most interesting committee of all for me. They put us on Mrs. Roosevelt's - what was the official name of it? It was Humanities or something like that. I've got to find out what that is. Anyway, my main work with her was we had to handle so many of the incomindiplomats from the black countries. They were sending their first representatives to the United Nations, and we had, naturally, we were all meeting with each other all the time and helping them get settled. But we could not take one black person to a single restaurant. Mrs. Roosevelt would ask elegant New York women, like Mrs. Hull and two or three other very, very generous women, to lend their apartments so we would have a place to ask these people to meet us for an evening. We couldn't take them to a restaurant.

Q: This was around 1950?

CABOT: Yes. You know, where we would go? We would hire a bus and take all these black diplomats to the Englewood Ferry, and crossing over, we went a little bit further to a restaurant. I'm sure it was a Mafia restaurant. But in those days, you didn't know anything about the Mafia. It was a generous Italian, and he would lend us his restaurant for our parties, of course, doing this for Mrs. Roosevelt. We would sit on that Palisades side and look at that beautiful New York and have a nice, big, gay party. And imagine how life has changed since.

Q: Oh, yes, yes. Did you work actually right with Mrs. Roosevelt on this?

CABOT: Oh, yes. We were with her, because she only had two or three people helping her.

Q: It must have been a tremendous experience working with her.

CABOT: It isn't her Humanities Committee, but it's that work...

Q: Human relations?

CABOT: Something like that. But her chief work was taking care of the new incoming Africans. Oh, she was an absolute knockout. She was the most extraordinary, most versatile, most determined women I've ever met in my life. (laughs)

Q: (laughs) and was she living in New York then?

CABOT: She always had her New York place.

Q: She always had her New York place.

CABOT: You see, we all lived at the Vanderbilt - the American delegation. They just gave us little bedrooms at the Vanderbilt, and she had her own place in New York. But her interest and her generosity, her interest in young people, and her interest in all these black people that were coming, representing the newborn countries, and so sensitive and lacking in extra funds and who suffered a great many insulting situations. It was a very interesting period.

Q: It must have been an extraordinary experience to work with her, too.

CABOT: She, afterwards, came to visit our embassies and other places. I'll never forget one of the lessons she taught me early. This was when I was in Finland. She arrived to visit and see what the Finns had done to restore their country after the German destruction during the War. So she visited a lot of hospitals and schools. I can remember perfectly well, about eight o'clock in the morning, before I really was awake, I was at one of the children's homes with her, where they took care of several hundred children. As we walked in downstairs, we went through the kitchens. The Finns had some cauldrons of cereal and cauldrons of soup which they dished out to the children. As we walked through, I looked into the cauldrons and I said to the teacher, "This looks very good. It looks like a very nice lunch for them." And then, as we went through the door, Mrs. Roosevelt turned around and said to me, "Don't you ever do a thing like that again." I said, "What do you mean?" She said, "You don't say that until you taste it. Go taste the soup."

Q: And see if it is good.

CABOT: And see if it's good, and then tell the teacher it was good.

Q: A very practical lady on top of all her other qualities. (laughs)

CABOT: And in every place I went with her, she was acutely practically interested in the details of survival for so many people. She was a grand person.

Q: Isn't that interesting for someone who grew up taking all of that just for granted?

CABOT: Well, she didn't get it for granted. I mean, it was given to her but nobody thought about the girl, so the girl had to find out for herself.

Q: Oh, I see.

CABOT: ...what there was in life.

Q: Oh, I see - third generation. She was just supposed to take up needlepoint and look after the children and go to tea parties?

CABOT: And look at the life she evolved.

Q: She certainly set the tone, didn't she?

CABOT: Yes, wonderfully ugly. I want to say this in the nicest way - sloppily dressed, practical, and active beyond belief. She was just remarkable.

Q: And how many years or for how long did you work with her closely like that?

CABOT: Oh, just that one year. And then, we went to Finland.

Q: And that's when she came to Finland?

CABOT: She came when we were in Finland. She was doing a tour in Europe.

Q: Shanghai, Helsinki, Stockholm.

CABOT: That was a very nice place, because we had the first Olympic Games there where the Russian groups were willing to go along with the rest of the groups. The Finns were terribly poverty stricken people. They had survived two bad wars, first the German invasion of Finland and then, as the Germans retreated, the Russians came in and took sections of Finland. To have that Olympic Games, the whole country had to get to work. It was just extraordinary how they trained themselves to welcome the Olympics - men, women, and children.

Q: There again, a national pride.

CABOT: Marvelous national pride. It was a lovely period. Then, finally, before we left, the Finns paid off their debt to Russia, and the Russians retreated from a place not more than forty miles from Helsinki, which they held like a gun until the Finns got their reparations paid.

Q: Paid, yes. So that was your first...

CABOT: Jack was Minister at that time. Finland was a minister, not an ambassador.

Q: But that was your first post where you were...?

CABOT: King of the castle.

Q: King of the castle, yes.

CABOT: And it was a lovely castle, because it was a copy of Westover. When the U.S. Government started to build embassies, they selected Westover down in Virginia as a model for an embassy house. It was furnished very elegantly with very good copies of American furniture. It was to be a distinguished, elegant American residence. Only trouble with it is that, with the years, embassies have gotten so huge and have so many people that it's a rather restricted embassy residence. I mean, the doors have been too small, and the people... There are really many more people than can fit into them. So there's been a good deal of criticism of it. But it was one of the prettiest and one of the most elegant of the first embassies.

Q: Weren't you fortunate to be there?

CABOT: Yes. It was lovely. We thoroughly enjoyed it. And right behind the door, there was a little hill and there was a little sign on it. The sign said, "This hill is reserved when there is snow for children and diplomats." (laughs)

Q: (laughs) And there was frequently snow - all the time?

CABOT: Oh, it snowed for months in the winter!

Q: How nice.

CABOT: And then we went up to Lapland at the time that we closed out the Hoover mission to Lapland. That's one of those things the United States just knows nothing about. At the end of the War, I must say, first the Germans did a destroying campaign and then the Russians took the little of what was left. The Lapps and the Northern Finns were left absolutely and utterly destitute. So the first thing that happened was that the Swedes said, "We will take as many of your children as you send to us. We'll promise to feed them, educate them, care for them, and return them when you are able to take care of them." I can't tell you how many hundreds of children were bundled on boats and sent to Sweden and lived in Sweden for almost ten years.

Q: Now is this in the 1940's after World War II? While you were in Finland?

CABOT: Yes, while we were in Finland. And then, we envisaged the terrible sadness of that gesture, because after ten years, which is a little too long, a baby going to Sweden, living in an elegant house with good schooling and good food (because you had to have resources to take those children), when the Finnish Government ordered their children home, the children went back to woodcutters' houses in the North of Lapland, the North of Finland, to the most poverty-stricken, hard-working people. And those children were absolutely and utterly desperate and destitute, because they were shifted too quickly from careful living and education back to the cold, Finnish reality. That was one of the tragedies of nice gestures.

Q: Now, what happened to those children?

CABOT: Well, they went back to their parents.

Q: And then did they make their way back to Sweden?

CABOT: Maybe some of them did. Most of them stayed with their parents, but the reason we were interested, mixed up in it, is that the Hoover Commission brought in shiploads and shiploads of food, and we fed the Lapps and the Northern Finns for a series of years until they could get on their feet again. This is one of the things that people don't realize in the States.

Q: Why is that called the Hoover Commission?

CABOT: Because President Hoover headed it.

Q: That was long after...?

CABOT: Oh, no, he was no longer President.

Q: He was no longer President, but he must have been at Stanford?

CABOT: Well, it was his group. You know, I don't remember us ever seeing Hoover up there. I saw Hoover in Argentina once, but I think they called Lapland and the Mayor of Rovaniemi, (the chief city of Finnish Lapland, a modern town of the Far North located almost directly on the line of the Arctic Circle, whose main street is part of the great Arctic highway that leads to the Barents Sea), who was the Mayor of Lapland, thanked the Americans for their aid and said aid was no longer necessary. They were back on their feet.

Q: They were back on their feet again.

CABOT: You know, when people live so simply with so much destruction in this world, it's marvelous when they finally can be themselves again.

Q: I didn't realize... Actually, did the War really go up that far or was it just because everything below was cut off?

CABOT: The Germans, in attacking Russia, moved up through Finland, yes, way up in the north of Finland to move into Russia.

Q: So they actually...

CABOT: And the Russians stopped them in Lapland. Of course, the Russians stopped them in Poland too. Afterwards, years later, in Poland, we could see all the redoubts that the Germans had built on the edges of Russia where Hitler had planned to move his entire headquarters as they attacked Russia.

Q: I'll have to look that up too. I did not know about the Hoover Commission to Lapland at all.

CABOT: I think it's one of the most generous things in this life.

Q: Was it part of the Marshall Plan?

CABOT: I can't tell you. This way you need my husband's records. He was exact, and I'm not.

Q: I'm exactly the same way.

CABOT: That's all in his records, you see.

Q: Yes.

CABOT: All his records were given to Tufts. They've all been microfilmed and they all sit at Tufts.

Q: At this new organization, this new Association for Diplomatic Studies, his records should be there.

CABOT: Well, his records are at Georgetown, and all the records of each administration or each one are at the Eisenhower Library and the Truman Library and the Johnson Library, his section with each of them is in their Library. You'll get at Georgetown a transcript. Yes, I think if they do develop one of diplomats, I think it'd be a good place for it too.

Q: Of course, it would be. Well, that's part of our reasoning for wanting to work with this Association for Diplomatic Studies, because we believe that the primary source for this information that you and I are talking about today should not be... I mean, it will be glorious and we will eventually have it at Radcliffe and Wellesley and, I presume, and who knows where else? But I think the primary source should be right here in the Foreign Service.

CABOT: Well, you see, his records are all strictly...

Q: Classified?

CABOT: No, no, not classified. I would say "factual." He didn't put the funny stories in.

Q: No, they don't, because that's not part...

CABOT: That isn't what they do, you see.

Q: That's not what they do, no.

CABOT: But you get all the dates and you get all the pages and the things from the men. You can get it from Georgetown or you can get it, maybe, by writing Tufts.

Q: Georgetown would be easier, I think.

CABOT: Easier for you to go to, walk in and see Peter Krough. Peter Krough is the head of the International Studies. And David Newsom. Peter Krough is the head of the Foreign Service School, and David Newsom is the actual...you know. He was Under Secretary of State, and David would probably be the man.

Q: Yes.

CABOT: I'm not sure that David's here right now. A man called Horan is running David's shop for him.

Q: I used to know someone named Harold Horan. Is that he?

CABOT: That's it, Harold Horan. Go see Harold, you see...

Q: All right.

CABOT: Because he'll do better for you, if you knew him.

Q: It's some years ago.

CABOT: And tell him what you want. You see, Muskie is the head of our group and he's the nicest man that ever lived.

Q: Edmund?

CABOT: Yes.

Q: Yes.

CABOT: And, you know, every time I see him talking, I keep saying what would have happened if he, instead of Reagan, had been President, because he's very much the same kind of father figure, generous, always developing. You remember, he was moved from the fray when he simply said that he was positive that he would never want to subject his wife to the attacks that a public personage has to.

Q: You know, she wrote a book last year. She and Abigail McCarthy wrote some kind of mystery. I went to the Women's National Democratic Club to hear the two of them speak and he was there. He spoke on being supportive of her project and he seemed to me exactly how you've described him.

CABOT: He's a marvelous man.

Q: A very nice, father figure, very nice man, and we...

CABOT: I said, "father figure, in the sense that that's one of Reagan's great strengths. The whole country is desperate for a father figure.

Q: Yes.

CABOT: We're having our Georgetown Board meeting next Friday, so they'll all be in town.

Q: "All" meaning?

CABOT: All of those men that we just spoke of.

Q: All those men that we just spoke of.

CABOT: Horan and David.

Q: And Muskie also? Well, of course, he's here.

CABOT: Yes.

Q: I had hoped eventually to interest Jane Muskie in this project, because she published her book, and I wish I could think of the name of it. But there again, the details. She published with the Athenean Press, which must be Boston, isn't it?

CABOT: I think so.

Q: I think so, and I thought you really need an introduction to these publishing houses. You need someone who has published to go in and say, "Look, take a look at this manuscript."

CABOT: Yes, otherwise...

Q: I thought we might work through Mrs. Muskie, but I haven't approached her yet, because we don't have the manuscript yet, but that is in the back of our minds, so I'm very happy to know that.

CABOT: Good.

Q: Each of these little connections is valuable. The trouble is that this program is developing so fast, and I learn about someone that sometimes months pass before I get to that stage.

CABOT: I think it would be interesting for you if you got women at different stages. You see, we were all the early stages, and I think you need very much to have a balance by what is happening to each kind of wife today.

Q: That's exactly what we're planning to do, but we're starting with your generation, because that's where it began really.

CABOT: You should go to the Jordans first.

Q: They're going to California and Florida (laughs) But that gives us the basis for the next generation to see what the changes are, because, of course, the obvious thing that's coming out of this project already is the changes in the Service, the changes of our perception of the Service...

CABOT: And what you need to do for the future.

Q: That's exactly...

CABOT: ...where the future must be helped.

Q: That's exactly the value of this project if someone at the State Department will then look at it. If we can turn out - oh, it's not going to be a best seller - let's not kid ourselves - but if we can turn out something, I would like for Judith Martin, who is a Foreign Service child, I would like for her to write the introduction.

CABOT: You know, there's a book that's written by Elizabeth Olds, which is about adventuresome women.

Q: Olds?

CABOT: Olds.

Q: Well, that's enough, because it will be under her name at the Library of Congress.

CABOT: And eventually somebody could write a book similar to Elizabeth Olds' book about adventures in the Foreign Service.

Q: I think so.

CABOT: That would be the way you'd reach a public.

Q: Yes. There are two books that I know of by a man named Charles Allen from the BBC (the British Broadcasting Company.) One of them is called Plain Tales of the Raj, and he interviewed the old remaining faction of the last days of the Empire in India. He only interviewed sixty-five people and he put it into a two hundred-some page book, and it was published in 1975. It's been so successful that it's come out in a much fancier illustrated edition that cost me much more than the original paperback, which I loaned to someone and never got back. He also did one Tales of Dark Africa, the end of the Colonial Empire in Africa.

CABOT: Those would be wonderful.

Q: I'm using those two as models. I do have other people interviewing for me. I'm using those as models for these people to gear their interviews for the information, for the anecdotes, and there's no reason why this can't be put together. It will take...

CABOT: ...take time.

Q: It takes time and it takes connections, too, and I'm very aware of that.

CABOT: Well, you'll come to it.

Q: And we'll work up to that eventually. There are four of us, and perhaps five of us, working on the interviews.

CABOT: How very nice. I think you ought to get interviews with girls who had a very hard time. I mean, some of us were lucky. Every now and then a girl might have been stuck in Recife or something and have a miserable time, and I think that needs to be added.

Q: It needs to be added, because that's another dimension of this.

CABOT: Of course. I love Recife, but that's a poor choice, but there are many posts that you were very isolated at.

Q: But you were isolated in Recife, you really were. And there was a very small American presence there during our stay there. I had to fall back on my own resources, so I found that my husband's chauffeur was very interested in food, very interested in the market and very interested in the dishes. I picked his brain for two years. When we would go on trips with my husband, and my husband was taken over by the Governor and whisked away in his limousine, that left me with the driver in the car. We'd head for the marketplace and the local restaurants and find out what their regional specialities were. And I wrote a cookbook.

CABOT: You've got a Brazilian cookbook?

Q: Yes, would you like to see it?

CABOT: Of course, I'd like to see it. I've got at least a couple of Brazilian cookbooks, but mine is much fancier. Mine is the one that the ladies produced for the unbelievable tea parties.

Q: Yes. Well, the tea parties are mentioned in this book, believe me, because, shall we say, I endured many of them. If we talk again, I'll bring you a copy or I'll send you a copy.

CABOT: Where can I get one? Can I get one at the Francis Scott Key?

Q: Well, but you see, I'm not selling it anymore, because I only printed five thousand copies, and all forty-nine hundred sold.

CABOT: How marvelous!

Q: And I have just one hundred or so left, but I'd be very happy...

CABOT: I'd be very interested to see it.

Q: All right, I'll send you a copy.

CABOT: And I would think what you'd do then is one of these days get a reprint for everybody going to Portuguese-speaking countries.

Q: You know, I just yesterday mailed a copy to... I met this perfectly charming girl who is teaching Portuguese at the Foreign Service Institute. At the luncheon where I met her, someone mentioned my cookbook and she said, "Oh, I'd love a copy for my students." So I sent it off to her and said, "If you think it's really interesting and you'd like to use it as a textbook, let me know, because I do have some copies left that I'll be very happy to send a number over to FSI. It's in English and Portuguese, so that the cook who can't speak English can read.

CABOT: Yes, it would be most valuable.

Q: And the spouse and the cook can work on it together both in their own language. But I couldn't find anyone in Brazil who would take it over as a business. So, when my copies are gone, it will be gone. The one I did in Curacao in 1971, I found someone in the Antilles to take over, and we've had a partnership for sixteen years. That's my mad money.

CABOT: Isn't that nice.

Q: Yes. I mean, every year he sends me a nice check, so that's been a very enjoyable outcome of my four years on Curacao.

CABOT: Isn't that nice.

Q: I'm getting away from your career. I hope that - just as the other day, talking to the three of you, made me aware of the period in which you served in the Service, that now today I've focused more on your career and maybe you brought up some memories that you haven't thought of for a number of years. If we could meet on another occasion, we could focus on Mrs. Roosevelt or focus on the Hoover Commission or focus on some aspect of your career that you feel hasn't been properly documented. None of this - nobody asked us what we did.

CABOT: Also, wives were not practical. I'm saying the wrong thing. Wives were not used, either in an official sense or...

Q: No. But you have constantly, today, said, "We did this and we went there." Your husband must have realized your value.

CABOT: We were interested together.

Q: It was part of your relationship. You were in it together, yes.

Well, really, what we're talking about now - those of us who enjoyed the Foreign Service, who had a very positive experience and came out of it much, much larger people and healthy.

CABOT: There are many of us.

Q: There are many of us, but there are the others who didn't make it, for one reason or another - marital health - children's illness.

CABOT: There were...

Q: That could be devastating.

CABOT: Therefore, I'm very pleased to find that they really are attacking that.

Q: They are.

CABOT: In the training and preparation of people for posts.

Q: Well, we got all of our shots now. You were just mentioning that in the old days, you only got shots for, what?

CABOT: Ah, typhoid.

Q: Typhoid.

CABOT: It depended on the post you were going to. Yellow fever, principally. It's very hard on little babies to get those fierce shots, but that is all being recognized. I'm pleased with that. Education has also been very much helped. So now, embassies are so big that of necessity they have to create either schools for them or arrange school patterns.

Q: Or we had educational allowances, too.

CABOT: Or educational allowances. You see, now I believe a child can be sent home to school and can be brought back once a year.

Q: I think so.

CABOT: I think so, which is a miracle.

Q: I know.

CABOT: Because in the old days, there were none of those allowances, and it was terribly hard on families. During the War, we had a committee and what I had to do was, I had to go to boarding schools and ask which boarding school would be willing to take a Foreign Service child for the duration as a gesture, a war gesture. You'd be very interested to find how many helped us. I think we were able to place, oh, twenty or more, Foreign Service children either for free or half for free in good boarding schools that made it a commitment for the War. We had to work very hard to try and put a child in a school that would suit the parents. I mean, a Southern child would prefer not a school up in Maine or something like that. And then, we had to take care of their vacations. It was a very busy committee during the War.

Q: I didn't know that.

CABOT: Yes.

Q: I didn't know that.

CABOT: We did quite a bit of that.

Q: So these were the parents who were out and really almost incommunicado?

CABOT: Who were stuck because of the War. And either you had to find ways of connecting those children with their relatives or connecting the children with someone who would care for them. We had cases of three or four Foreign Service people who took three and four children for Christmas or three and four children for a vacation. That was their war gesture.

Q: Now, I didn't know.

CABOT: Oh, there were lots of nice people.

Q: I didn't know.

CABOT: There are lots of nice people in this life.

Q: Yes. I didn't know that. I was really totally unaware of that.

CABOT: Well, you see, since then, the State Department has improved on it. They are now giving many more allowances to people, and in most of our posts, you know, we had to run big schools. Not only did the American children go to them, but there were lots of children from other countries.

Q: Exactly, because all the other countries would like their children to have an American education. We found in Holland, when we started the American International School of Rotterdam, we started with seven students. Now, it's a huge thriving thing. It is the school that draws - of course, Rotterdam being a very important port - people there, because their children can have a good education and not have to study in Dutch. There's nothing wrong with studying Dutch, except that you can't use it anywhere else.

CABOT: Yes. Well, the interesting thing for a Foreign Service girl is there are so many different things she can do. I think if she can't necessarily save the nation as some people think if you're going in the Service, but there are so many facets of life that a girl can pursue. I know the anguish today is that they think that they can't make any money, and it's very much affecting the present-day girl who feels that her career is good only if she makes a certain amount of money.

Q: Unfortunately, that is our measure of value and success these days. I wonder if perhaps it's a bit more than that too. I would be just staggered if I were looking at college tuition bills every year of seventeen and nineteen thousand.

CABOT: Unbelievable.

Q: And housing. I'm glad I'm not buying. Well, I am buying housing these days for my children (laughs), but at least they are making monthly payments. But if they're on their own...

CABOT: It's terrible.

Q: It's terrible, and perhaps these women really do need an income. If they really do need an income to buy a house and educate their children, then the State Department, I feel right now that they should be hired to do what you and I did. They should be hired as Foreign Service wives. We should give more dignity - not that I think our position needed more dignity, but they do today, but they should be given more dignity. They should have a job description, they should have a salary, they should have guidelines.

You would be amazed at the number of people who are not entertaining today because they're single and there's no one at home to put the dinner party together. Our experience at our last few posts was that there was always adequate representational allowance.

CABOT: I'm just very much into asking you this question. I used to rotate my people at the embassies, at the big parties, because I think it was necessary that they knew their embassy. If I'm going to say to a little girl, "I've got to pay you $2.50 an hour to come in and pour tea for me or come in and circulate and see that not too many old ladies don't carry away too many cakes in their bag," (laughs) or I needed them, because I had too many visiting senators and visiting VIPs of some sort, and I would say, "Somebody from California is coming or somebody from Nevada is coming, so which one of you would like to help me by going around and doing some shopping with the wife of the Senator from Nevada?" I tried to make it a personal business. I thought it was very necessary for them to know how to do it. Now, if I am going to be on a tight budget and I'm going to have to just barely survive by allowances, which have been very much cut down, I'm more inclined not to ask people to help.

Q: Not to ask her to help. But, you see, it shouldn't come from your budget. She should have a salary to go abroad to be a diplomat's wife.

CABOT: Now you have the next problem. The next problem is one girl is going to be first rate. She's going to probably learn the language. She's going to circulate and she's really going to make herself useful. And the next girl will come in with a friend and stand in a corner and have a cheerful chat.

Q: Then, girl number one should be promoted on her own merits, not within the embassy system, but just - there again, financial reward is what they are measured by.

CABOT: Yes, but the reward that you give to a girl in a post is a measure of a few dollars. It isn't a salary.

Q: And it would also affect morale, I think.

CABOT: And affect morale, because, to be perfectly honest with you, some are more competent at it. But this is why I am very much interested in this question of what you would pay a girl. What did they say the other day? A dollar and a half an hour?

Q: (laughs)

CABOT: Because it was the only way that you could get people trained to know what it's about and to meet people, the point being to meet people. I could see that you pay a girl to work in a school. All of our wives worked in the schools. If they didn't do one thing, they did another. I could see a fixed salary arrangement for that.

Q: The situation has gotten so at embassies that you could almost hire someone to take care of the representational set-up for entertaining for six or eight single officers. She could go in and have his table set, see that the cooking was done, and oversee... That would work, it really would.

CABOT: Are they doing that?

Q: I don't think so. I don't know. Maybe they are somewhere, but that is one way that you could hire a wife without having her have to look to the local economy for a job, because the jobs just aren't out there.

CABOT: But would you have a nice time going to a country like Italy, say, or any little country where maids are a dime a dozen, and having an embassy wife come in and do the cooking and setting up a party? It would just absolutely drive the locals crazy.

Q: I think it would. I'm not saying that I think this is the right thing to do, but it's one solution. They're going to have to do something about the wives.

CABOT: It's very interesting and very troublesome.

Q: Yes. Tomorrow's "Post" is going to be on women and blacks. I think the spouse issue must be something separate. I think he must be dealing with women officers and blacks tomorrow, so it will be interesting to see. But I'm waiting for the one when he deals with the spouse issue, which is the most...

CABOT: The interesting thing is we now have men and women married to each other at post, and she is smart and she gets promoted, and he doesn't. That has happened.

Q: Or she's the officer, and he's the dependent.

CABOT: Yes. (tape is interrupted) There's every kind of case that has to be thought through.

Q: Which complicates the role of the embassy even further really.

CABOT: Yes. Therefore, I think we can't be too lenient. I think that we need now to go the other way and simply say, "We're going to give you certain advantages and we're going to give you certain experiences, and you can have an extraordinary life with a great deal of support. But then, you must also prepare that you give up some things for it. The young are not quite ready to give up at the moment.

Q: But what you've just said is the reality. I wouldn't trade my Foreign Service experience for...

CABOT: ...anything!

Q: ...anything!

CABOT: It's a perfectly miraculous life. It's the only life I can think of where you're with your husband all the time and involved all the time, both of you.

Q: I was going to mention earlier that I think one of the strengths of our earlier careers, too, was our relationship with our spouses, and I'm not implying that young people today don't have equally profound and intertwined relationships.

CABOT: But this is particularly interesting and appealing to a thoughtful girl.

Q: Well, I think so.

CABOT: The problem is, young men have to wait too long to get in now. By that time, they've devolved other courses of life, and the girl has also. I think that's one of the main difficulties. You can't catch them young enough so they evolve together.

Q: Or they met in graduate school, and she has her career, and this is law or medicine or architecture or something she can't bounce from country to country.

CABOT: Because there's many, many a wife who pursues her own career. The wife of a university president is one of the perfect examples of it. Again and again, the wife has a very specialized career of her own, but a young Foreign Service officer needs a wife who wants to do what he wants.

Q: Another statistic which interested me in yesterday's article was that two hundred officers come in every year. Twenty thousand have applied, which means that there are one hundred people applying for every junior officer position. Why shouldn't the State Department look at the wives or look at the women, the girlfriends, look at the companions, and tell them what it's all about and ask them what they are planning to do?

CABOT: But you have to reverse this. You have to look at the girl who wants to come in and ask her what kind of a boyfriend she's going to get.

Q: Both.

CABOT: I think it's very important. In the old days, we were looked over when we came in. I can't tell you what fun I had when I was looked over. I came to Washington, and my friends took me right in hand. They said, "You are going down tomorrow to be looked over by the Chief of Personnel. Take that red stuff off your fingernails, don't put on any lipstick, put on a little blue dress with a little white collar, and go down and talk about prison reform. And you will get in. (laughs) It just happened we had a Chief of Personnel who was very serious and who didn't like flighty women. And so, we all adopted these patterns and we all got in.

Q: But what would have happened if he hadn't liked you? Would your husband...?

CABOT: My husband would not have been given a certain mark on on his paper. I mean, the wife sort of had to pass, because the trouble is that the husband presented the wife after they were married. You see, I wasn't taken to him before I was married.

Q: After, because you were married in Mexico City?

CABOT: Yes, that's why I had to be looked over.

Q: Do you remember who the Chief of Personnel was?

CABOT: He was a man from Boston. He was very much interested in prison reform. He was a bachelor. It was l932. I hate to tell you how much I've forgotten, but, as I said, they did look the girls over.

Q: What kind of questions did he ask you?

CABOT: What I was interested in. If I was interested in serious things or whether I was interested in frivolity.

Q: I think this is absolutely extraordinary.

CABOT: It was wonderful. You see, what amused me so much is we all immediately put our warpaint on as soon as we got out of his office.

Q: And you really did go in with your little blue dress with the white collar and no lipstick?

CABOT: Because of my smart friend, you just did that. (laughs)

Q: I think this is wonderful. (laughs)

CABOT: That's part of the fun, you see, part of the old history of the Service. And later on there were many other chiefs of protocol, who probably had all kinds of other standards.

Q: Now, when did that practice stop? When did they stop looking over the wives?

CABOT: I don't think it ever sort of stopped. I think during the War (World War II), there were so many wives - no man was allowed to marry a foreign wife. That was the first thing. And after the War, it was very troublesome, because so many men had met wives abroad. When they came in - those other letters - AID, USIS - into State - they had to change the law. Now, for instance, there's a man living here, one of our oldest Foreign Service men, Joe Satterthwaite, who met his wife in Turkey. She was Turkish. White Russian. He sent her back to Michigan where she lived with his three spinster sisters the necessary three years in Michigan to get her American citizenship while he was abroad. And the day she got it, he came back and got her and they were married, because he was not allowed to marry her as a White Russian, you see.

Q: It must have been miraculous that she survived those three years.

CABOT: Perfectly marvelous, because it couldn't have been more different - Constantinople to a small town in Michigan. Leila lives here. She has been a very good Foreign Service wife, very active. She is terribly nice. She is small and she is spry and she is just as active as she can be and she has been a very good Foreign Service wife.

Q: Isn't that something! But the White Russians were the intellectual...

CABOT: They were the refugees in Constantinople, you see.

Q: She had a background that enabled her to do that?

CABOT: She had a nice and interesting background, but the cruelty was that they made her wait so long to be married.

Q: I get back to Mrs. Jordan, a 90 year old woman in Santa Barbara. When she and her husband were married in 1921, there was no restriction on foreign wives, and Mrs. Jordan told me that, because I asked, "Well, didn't you need permission? And she said, "No, you didn't need permission in those days. That all came around when an ambassador...

CABOT: Bill Bullitt. (Hon. William Christian Bullitt, AE/P Soviet Union l933 and AE/P France l936)

Q: Is that who it was?

CABOT: And Bill Bullitt went to Russia...

Q: And Fanny Chipman was the only American wife at the table.

CABOT: You see, they had a counselor, who was called Wiley, Johnny Wiley, and he had a Polish wife called Irena, and...

Q: I think she wrote a book.

CABOT: She is a sculptress and she also wrote a book.

Q: Yes, yes. And, as a matter of fact, one of our interviewers has that book and is using it as a reference.

CABOT: And I'm trying to remember the other wives, but they were probably French wives and Polish wives, and Bill Bullitt said, "Nothing doing. The American embassy ought to be represented by American women." (laughs)

Q: Do you know when that was? What year was it?

CABOT: Oh, dear. You know Bill Bullitt went to establish our first American embassy after the War, so it must have been around l945...

Q: l945...l946?

CABOT: Yes.

Q: And now, of course, that's all been undone again.

CABOT: Well, you see, as soon as the War came, and we added the Information Service and a great many other services, so many men were already married to foreign wives, you couldn't possibly follow that rule. I don't know whether they made them go through a spell of becoming Americans. They probably did, but that I don't know. But, I tell you, they've made lots of changes.

Q: Lots of changes. And he had enough influence so that he could get his...

CABOT: Oh, he had enormous influence with Roosevelt, you see. Now, Leila's one of your oldest people here. Joe Satterthwaite and Jack, my husband, were in the second Foreign Service class. And I think there is nobody (else) living today, but George Kennan, who was in the first Foreign Service class. And he is alive today.

Q: But he's not married, is he?

CABOT: Yes, he's married. I think she is either Danish or Swedish. I think she's Danish. (Transcriber's note: Mrs. Kennan is Norwegian.)

Q: We should talk to her, too.

CABOT: She had a very lively life. George always felt himself somewhat separate from the Service.

Q: Yes, I know that.

CABOT: I think she is Annelise, if I remember.

Q: Is Leila Satterthwaite here?

CABOT: She lives right here on Upton Street.

Q: Could we talk to her?

CABOT: Yes. She is very vigorous, You'll find that Joe is quite under the weather.She takes very good care of Joe. There's your foreign wife, you see.

Q: Foreign wife. It would be interesting to talk to one who...

CABOT: Who had to go through the...

Q: Yes. Definitely we should talk to her. How many young women today would spend three years under those circumstances? Not very many.

CABOT: It takes lots of affection.

Q: I wonder how often she saw him during that time?

CABOT: I don't know. I think at that time she couldn't see him at all, because he was probably at the end of... He was in Buenos Aires with us. I guess he was in Buenos Aires when we were in Rio, and he was in the Middle East. I forget exactly which States, so I don't think she was in any way accessible.

Q: You know, the interesting thing is, I think I sent you one of those information papers.

CABOT: Yes, interview papers.

Q: Interview papers.

CABOT: And, you know, I started to write it out, and then I realized that I didn't have any dates for you.

Q: That's all right, because I have all the posts and everything. Now, I forgot what I was going to ask you. Oh, I know - on it, it asks for "profession." Invariably, your generation and my generation will put "Foreign Service wife."

CABOT: Yes.

Q: The younger they get, it's "marketing manager" or whatever.

CABOT: Because we didn't have professions.

Q: But the Foreign Service was our profession.

CABOT: Yes.

Q: You see, I guess that's the point I was trying to make earlier, that the Department of State is going to have to make the Foreign Service wife a professional role again, and they're going to have to do it in a different manner.

CABOT: The only thing I can possibly imagine they could help with is they could do some office work, when you're talking about paying them.

Q: Yes.

CABOT: Maybe a poor, intelligent girl could learn to file or something.

Q: But that's exactly what has happened. They have something called the American Family Member Program, and at our last embassy, the DCM's wife was running the switchboard, the consul general's wife was filing in a visa office, the administrative officer's wife was selling alcohol in the commissary. I had the one job, the community liaison officer, which was doing what I had done for the other twenty-eight years, but I laughed, because I was getting paid for it.

CABOT: I think maybe that's one of the answers.

Q: But they're all underemployed. When we didn't have the DCM's wife on the switchboard, we had a brilliant little girl who had a degree from Oxford in both Turkish and she'd read in two disciplines at Oxford and had an advanced degree, and she was answering our switchboard. She was cute in a way, because she used to tab whom the calls came in for and she decided that my husband was the busiest man in the embassy. Well, of course, what she didn't know at that time was that the ambassador and the DCM had their own private line. So their calls didn't go through her. (laughs) So, they were a little busier than she thought.

CABOT: Maybe that's one of the evolutions.

Q: That's one thing that they have been able to do, and then they do have bilateral agreements with countries, so that...

CABOT: How many girls can get $30,000 in Botswana?

Q: Not one. Not one. And, do you remember during the Kennedy Administration - no, you left just at that time, didn't you? I was told by one of the women that I interviewed that Katie Loucheim, during the Kennedy Administration, pressured the senior wives, wives of the ambassadors, to get volunteer senior wives, wives of the ambassadors, to get volunteer programs going in the various countries. I remember when I was in Sierra Leone, our DCM's wife - because the ambassador's wife was political - she was a lovely little grandmother from Missouri, so she left everything to the DCM's wife - pressured us to work on every charity. We used to go down and sell - no, we'd go down to give away cornmeal, American cornmeal, to the people of Sierra Leone from the people of the United States. We'd give that away in the morning, and then, in the afternoon we'd go down and buy it at the open market, because that was the only way we could get American cornmeal. (laughs) And we weighed babies, and...

CABOT: If it's necessary, that's good; if it's fabricated, it's terrible.

Q: And that's what was happening, of course. People were fabricating, because of this pressure that was apparently going on among the upper echelon.

CABOT: No, I missed all of that.

Q: I think that came right after.

CABOT: It came after my time. She lives about two blocks away from me, or used to.

Q: Katie Loucheim? Is she still here in Washington?

CABOT: I haven't seen her for a long time. She was a pressure lady.

Q: Yes. Do you know what her role was in the Kennedy Administration?

CABOT: I had nothing to do with her. I knew her as an author and as a neighbor.

Q: Did you feel that you had undue pressure as you progressed in the Service? Did you feel that the pressures got greater and greater and greater? Well, they obviously did, but did they become more of a challenge or did they become overwhelming?

CABOT: That, again, is overwhelmingly dependent upon the individual you're working with. One of the interesting things about it is you have every kind of pressure, personal pressure. You get some wonderful ambassadors and you get some appalling ones, and you have to swing between them, survive them. I got both kinds. And I think the pressure came from what some people thought you needed to do for them without it being in the book.

Q: Yes.

CABOT: But, again, that's highly personal. I don't think it's anything the State Department can regulate.

Q: Well, didn't they regulate it to a certain extent then when they issued the 1972 Directive and proclaimed us all independent women and not subject to those pressures? Do you think...?

CABOT: I was well out of it by then, you see, so I didn't get any of that. I was well out of it.

Q: I think that's the way the State Department handled that, rightly or wrongly.

CABOT: No, I had some ambassadors over me that almost killed me, but they were very good for me. And I had some I could escape. It just depended, you see, how it worked.

Q: Even the negative experiences, you learned.

CABOT: You do, but I think it's curious if it's ordered from Washington, because everything is highly personal at a post. It's the people you're dealing with, and the place, and the temperature, and the culture. There was one Foreign Service girl who did wonders. She's Carol Scherer. Bud Scherer became ambassador in Togo. When she got to Togo, they were in a terrible state of penury. So she said, "We can do something about this." Being a very smart girl, she started a business of making clothes out of those wonderfully-colored cotton materials. She first went to Lord and Taylor and some of these American groups and said, "If I send you some nice, gay, mid-summer clothes, would you show them and perhaps sell them?" So, she got her background established. Then she came back to Togo and she helped the Togo people build up a wonderful shop called "Togo-A-Go-Go." And, you know, for about three years during the time that she was there, it was just a (most successful thing).

***

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Date and place of birth: November ll, l906, Mexico City, Mexico

Parents names and professions:

Herbert Pickering Lewis

Eva Jane Hill

Schools:

Shipley School, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania

Sorbonne, Paris, France, 1926

Vassar College, 1927

Date and place of marriage: March 30, l932, Mexico City, Mexico

Maiden name: Elizabeth Lewis

Children: Four children

Date spouse entered Service: l927Left Service: 1965

Present status: Widow of ambassador

End of interview